

THORNBURY TOWN COUNCIL

**Minutes of the Town Council Meeting
held on Tuesday 20 October 2020 at 7.30pm
via Video Conference (Virtual Meeting)**

Present: Cllrs Jayne Stansfield (Chair)
Christopher Davies (Vice Chair)
Benj Emmerson
Bob Griffin
Shirley Holloway
Clive Parkinson
Guy Rawlinson
Pam Shipp
Matthew Stringer
Maggie Tyrrell

Louise Powell - Town Clerk

(Cllr Ashley Bijster – absent)
(Cllr Eva Fielding – absent)
(Cllr Martin Trueman – absent)

(Minutes – Wendy Sydenham – Deputy Town Clerk
completed via recording of meeting)

1. **To receive any apologies for absence**

265/20. Cllr Helen Harrison – work commitment
Cllr Angela Symonds – out of Thornbury

2. **To receive any member’s declarations of interest**

266/20. None were declared.

3. **To receive any Chairman’s announcements**

267/20. The Chair reported that she had attended a recent event, as Mayor, at St Mary’s Church in Thornbury to mark the Installation of the Priest in Charge. As numbers were limited at the event, a recording was available through the Church.

4. **To receive any representations from the public**

268/20. No members of the public were present.

5. **To consider the following general matters relating to Council finance**

(a) **To approve the Accounts for Payment**

269/20. It was agreed that at meetings where Accounts for Payment were presented for approval, the names of two Councillors who had scrutinised invoices relating to each entry should be noted. Cllr Maggie Tyrrell and Cllr Chris Davies confirmed that they had scrutinised the invoices.

270/20. The following accounts now due for payment were proposed by Cllr Benj Emmerson, seconded by Cllr Chris Davies, and unanimously agreed for payment to be approved:-

ACCOUNTS PAID OUT OF MEETING

South Gos Council	Rates (Oct DD)	1310.00
South Gos Council	Rates (Oct DD)	334.00
Sage UK	Accounts Software (Oct DD)	102.00
Lloyds Bank PLC	Credit Card Payment (DD)	202.66
Pitney Bowes Finance	Franking Machine Quarterly Rental (DD)	94.93
Octopus Energy	Electricity – T/Hall (Oct DD)	335.26
Octopus Energy	Electricity – T/Hall (Oct D/D)	10.70
Ecotricity.co.uk	Electricity – Museum (AH)	268.84

ACCOUNTS NOW DUE FOR PAYMENT

Central Services

Cash	Petty Cash	200.00
Matrix BES Ltd	Boiler Service (split bill)	168.00
Photographer	Town Mayor Portraits	200.00
PKF Littlejohn LLP	External Audit Return	2400.00
RBS Rialtas	Year End Staff Costs	240.00
Consortium	Stationery	83.21
Ecotricity.co.uk	Electricity – Bakery Annex (Jigsaw)	363.96
MCL	Photocopier Charges (credits applied @ £220.05)	16.67

Playing Fields & Cemetery

Advance Grass Solutions Ltd	Paint – Pitches Marking	96.05
Matrix BES Ltd	Boiler Service (split bill)	168.00
Bowcom	Bow Grass Supreme	627.00
Brass Founders	Brass Plaque	126.41
Brass Founders	Brass Plaque	126.41
Brass Founders	Brass Plaque	126.41
Brass Founders	Brass Plaque	126.41
G B Sport & Leisure	Play Equipment Parts	65.76
Consortium	Liquid Soap	14.03

Land & Property

Matrix BES Ltd	Boiler Service (split bill)	192.00
----------------	-----------------------------	--------

(b) To note the revised figures on the AGAR following legal and external audit advice

271/20. The revised AGAR figures had been circulated and were noted. The Clerk highlighted that boxes 4 and 6 had been revised following legal and external audit advice. This had meant that there were now no variances relating to those boxes. The revised AGAR had been submitted and received by external audit. The Clerk thanked the RFO and the Deputy Clerk for their assistance with this process.

6. **To consider the following matters to begin preparations for setting a Council budget for 2021/22**

(a) To receive feedback from the Town and Parish Forum on the impact of COVID-19 on South Gloucestershire Council finances and the impact that this will have on the Council Tax Base

272/20. The Clerk updated Council on a recent presentation by South Gloucestershire Council regarding the impact of COVID-19 on their own budgets. They had confirmed that they had been significantly affected financially by the pandemic, although less so than many other Councils nationally. With the use of reserves, the situation next year should be manageable. However, the impact on the following year's budget was much more uncertain and therefore could be more significant. There had been a substantial increase in the number of people claiming Council Tax benefits which would impact the Council Tax Base and the Band D figure. This may be offset slightly in some areas, including Thornbury, by housing growth. However, they had asked Town and Parish Councils to be very mindful of the difficult financial circumstances when setting their budgets over the next few years. The Clerk highlighted that it was likely that the Council Tax Base and Band D figures would not be available until the end of November/beginning of December and that Council needed to be as prepared as possible in advance of these figures being available.

(b) To review Council and Committee spend to date against the 2020/2021 budget

273/20. The Clerk had circulated the Income and Expenditure financial statement up to and including September 2020. It was noted that this showed that income was relatively on target and expenditure at this stage was just below 40% which meant that Council was in a sound financial position. There were some areas of overspend and underspend due to COVID-19.

(c) To consider budget pressures and Council priorities for 2021/2022

274/20. The Clerk had circulated draft budget documents. Two versions of the draft budget had been produced (i) with a general 3% increase, except for budget lines which had been consistently underspent in previous years and had therefore been reduced or removed, and with a much larger increase for the budget line to address works highlighted in the general buildings condition survey that needed to be carried out in 2021/2022, and (ii) a version that also included additional/new items to be considered/purchased. The effect on the precept of each draft version was noted, however the Clerk highlighted that in light of the recent presentation by South Gloucestershire Council, the Council Tax Base figure may need to be adjusted down.

275/20. The Clerk highlighted that the grant to the Armstrong Hall was currently included in the draft budget and that this needed to be considered carefully if the building remained shut during the financial year and therefore not contributing to the community. It was also important to consider whether the grant needed to go through the normal grants application process. This issue was discussed in detail, including who should make any grant application and who should consider it, and the role of the Armstrong Hall Management Committee in this process compared to the role of the Trust. It was agreed that the Clerk should seek legal advice on this issue from ALCA. It was also agreed that the Clerk would provide a list of "known costs" for the Armstrong Hall. It was noted that it would be difficult to provide a budget for the Armstrong Hall at this stage without knowing what would be happening in the building and prior to receiving the general condition survey report. It was agreed that the 2021/2022 budget for Armstrong Hall would need to be discussed by the Armstrong Hall Trust at its next meeting.

(d) To consider the CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) programme – to review the report for year 2018/2019 and consider priorities for future expenditure, noting the feedback from South Gloucestershire Council on forthcoming CIL funds

- 276/20. The Clerk had circulated a number of documents related to CIL. The CIL statement for 2018/2019 had been circulated and was noted. The Clerk confirmed that this had been submitted and was displayed on the noticeboard and on the website.
- 277/20. The document setting out the current CIL programme and spend had been circulated and was noted. It was clarified that general Council reserves did not include CIL earmarked reserves. The Clerk highlighted that South Gloucestershire Council had warned that there may be issues with collecting further CIL payments. The Clerk confirmed that CIL funds had to be spent within five years of receipt. The CIL funds allocated to the splash pad were discussed and it was noted that work continued on exploring options in this area, and that once more clarification was obtained regarding what was feasible, the overall costs would need to be considered carefully. The Clerk highlighted that the current draft budgets did not include any funding for a potentially significant increase in water costs relating to the splash pad.
- 278/20. It was noted that it would be useful to develop a strategic plan in order to assist with budget setting in the future. Due to current workload pressures, this would not be done for the 2021/2022 budget setting, but that it would be good to aim to do this when setting the 2022/2023 budget.
- 279/20. With regard to progressing the budgeting process for 2021/2022, it was agreed that a working group be set up. This group would be made up of the Clerk and Cllrs Clive Parkinson, Guy Rawlinson, Jayne Stansfield, Bob Griffin and Chris Davies and they would be able to meet in the Council Chamber.

7. **To nominate an additional representative from Council for the Community Engagement Forum**

- 280/20. It was agreed that Cllr Clive Parkinson join Cllr Matthew Stringer as the second representative from Council on the CEF.

8. **To receive any correspondence and notices to be dealt with on the grounds of urgency**

- 281/20. The Clerk reported that she had sent details of minor amendments to the Neighbourhood Plan to Cllrs Clive Parkinson, Maggie Tyrrell and Matt Stringer, in their capacity as Council representatives on the Steering Group. The Clerk asked them to read the amendments and confirm back to her whether they had any questions regarding them or whether they were happy to approve them.

9. **To resolve under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, that the public and press be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business as publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest because of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted**

- 282/20. Resolved.

10. **To consider the staffing review paper written by the Town Clerk and associated documents**

- 283/20. The Clerk had circulated a paper and supporting documents that had been requested by the Finance and Policy Committee relating to the impact on staffing of some recent changes. The Clerk highlighted a number of issues covered by the paper and also outlined her recommendations. The paper was discussed in detail and the issues it raised and the Clerk's recommendations were noted. It was agreed that this would be considered further as part of the overall budget setting process. It was also agreed that an issue relating to one of the posts mentioned in the paper should be put on the agenda for the next Staffing

Committee meeting.

11. **To consider the following quotations**

(a) Fire safety remedial works

284/20. During the survey of Council's existing fire safety equipment, a number of works had been identified and quoted for by our fire safety company. The Clerk highlighted that this company had demonstrated value for money in relation to repairs during the contract awarding process. The Clerk outlined the repairs needed at the Town Hall. It was agreed that these should be carried out. The Clerk also outlined repairs needed at the Bakery Annex. These involved a larger sum of money and it was therefore agreed that Council should wait to receive the general condition survey report on the Bakery Annex in order to assess these repairs in light of other works that the survey recommended.

(b) ICCM training for outside staff on cemetery management

285/20. The Clerk outlined details and costs of two training courses that had been highlighted by our health and safety advisor as essential for all staff who work in the Cemetery. These training courses were only provided by ICCM and it was necessary to train all five outdoor staff as they all worked in the Cemetery. It was agreed that the training courses should be arranged for these staff.

(c) Cable and points to improve Council Wi-Fi

286/20. The Clerk reported that a quote had been obtained from our IT support company to improve the Wi-Fi in the Town Hall. This would become important if "hybrid" Council meetings needed to take place in the future (i.e. part remote/part in person). It was agreed that the works should be carried out to improve the Wi-Fi.